

Nimuendajú: The Eastern Timbira

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587 Within the whole span of my experience I observed a single instance of the levirate, an elderly widower marrying his younger brother's widow. It struck me as an exceptional case. There certainly was not the least obligation for such a step; on the contrary, several Indians seemed to regard the affair as a bit peculiar and the manner in which the man concerned, my "brother," chief Kukráčá, told me about it sounded almost apologetic.

MATRILocal RESIDENCE; IN-LAWS

591 There is strict matrilocality; even if a husband builds a separate dwelling for his wife, it is invariably erected beside her mother's. I know of no instance of a woman's spending as much as a single night in her husband's mother's house except [758] to tend him during a serious illness, for in that case he would invariably be conveyed to his maternal home. Sometimes, as noted, a niece may be raised in her paternal aunt's house.

578 As a rule a young husband plays a very modest part in his mother-in-law's house. If his conduct is disapproved of, he is not indeed turned out of doors, but the other inmates simply ignore him. Unless, then, the union is of the indissoluble type, the poor fellow either turns over a new leaf or takes his sleeping mat, either returning to his mother's dwelling or joining his age class in the plaza.

606 During the first years of wedlock a man never communicates directly with his 607 parents-in-law, his wife serving as an intermediary for either party. In the course of time—especially after the arrival of children—the rule is relaxed, that is, at first only between father-in-law and son-in-law, who henceforth converse with fair freedom from restraint. Finally, the wife's mother also addresses her daughter's husband, though a certain reserve is maintained inasmuch as they avoid meeting or addressing each other when by themselves. In case of a chance encounter the son-in-law gives the woman a wide berth.

On the other hand, a husband is quite free in his intercourse with his wife's brothers. In several instances I was struck by their inconsiderate use of the husband's personal property, and a certain Nyóhi once confidentially complained to me about the tyranny of his brothers-in-law. Connections by marriage never address each other by their names, but use the proper kinship terms unless they are each other's hapin or kwu'nó, which makes them substitute these terms. A woman calls a man "my son-in-law" even after the dissolution of the marriage.

421 A good son-in-law is, above all, expected to lay out a plantation for his wife and 593 to supply her with meat. Many couples remain in the wife's maternal home for good; some erect one for themselves, but this always belongs to the wife, even after divorce, notwithstanding the fact that it was built by her husband.

522 From the matrilocality organization, coupled with feminine house and field owner- 554 ship, as well as control of the children, it follows that the husband as such plays a minor role, his influence resting on personal merit. With the lapse of time some may thus attain an important position, others remain subordinate all their lives. In no circumstances is there any question of masculine dominance over a wife and children.

177 The contact with civilization, facilitating housebuilding and agriculture through 562 the introduction of iron tools, enhanced the importance of women, while that of 736 men rather decreased through the elimination of war and the diminution of hunting. A widow's destitution, a disowned wife's misery, a couple's quarrel over the control of their offspring—these are matters known to the Canella only as occurring among their civilized neighbors. After the husband's death the widow and her

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574 among his own people. This man assigned a corner of his house as our lodging, had;
648 his wife roast some gourds, and even managed to secure a bit of meat for us. During
609 the night I was unable to sleep a wink, for Kopkré harangued the Apá'nyekra seated
[537] around him literally from 7 P.M. until 4 A.M. Not at that time understanding a word
of Timbira speech, I asked him what he had told our hosts; he replied that he had
admonished them to live peaceably and morally. It is inexplicable whence he derived
the substance of his Marathon speeches, for the replies of the Apá'nyekra were far
briefer; however, at least some of them listened to the very end.

648 In 1930 the Rámkó'kamékra were struck with the disconcerting lack of arara
438 feathers required for the ketáyé initiation. Accordingly, they once more—with all
due precautions—sent an embassy to the Apá'nyekra, who were somewhat better
off in this respect, in order to get arara feathers in exchange for clay tobacco pipes
of Neobrazilian type which had been manufactured by old Kúkráçá'.

648 In 1933 a Krahó' delegation accompanied by one Kénkatéye visited us at Ponta.
574 The Krahó' have no honorary chief there, but being on close terms of friendship
with the Apá'nyekra they proceeded to the house of the above-mentioned woman
married to a member of this tribe. At sunset, as the councilors were assembling in
the plaza, the head chief Ropká' rose and for a while sang with outstretched arms.
Then he leaned on his staffelub, rocking his body to and fro, and with his powerful
voice shouted toward the house harboring the newcomers, "You poor fellows! I pity
you! Don't you know how malevolent our tribe is! Truly you are men of courage to
have ventured here. Now come to the plaza and tell us what you are here for! Don't
linger long! Hurry, so that we may find out!" Thereupon the three guests paid their
respects to the chiefs and sat down, saying they had come for a visit. Actually, their
object was apparently to induce me to return to the Krahó'. Then Ropká' sent them
to his dwelling to eat. These visitors were well treated and stayed over a week. What-
ever house they entered, they were entertained with food, and wantons were sup-
plied to sleep with them.

The reception of a Guajajára embassy has already been described on page 46 f.
574 The Eastern Timbira, as indicated by my experiences among the Apá'nyekra, are
609 not particularly hospitable to civilized visitors. It is true that no tribe will deny a
577 transient a night's lodging. Usually one of the chiefs, or often enough some other
resident, will allot the traveler a place in his wife's or mother's dwelling, except
possibly among the Apá'nyekra, where I noticed a dilapidated shed for strangers.
However, food is provided only for an old acquaintance who has extended hospi-
tality to the Indians; whether other strangers go hungry, is nobody's concern. If
the traveler makes an impression of wealth, he is brought some trifling "gift"—a
mere overture for unremitting mendicancy. Chiefs, however, are not supposed to
beg in the way of the Apá'nyekra chief described above. I have never heard of a
guest being robbed by his immediate hosts, but he has to be aware of inquisitive
visitors from other households. I can certainly not vouch with the same enthusiasm
as Sæthlage for the honesty and trustworthiness of the Rámkó'kamékra.⁼⁼

LAW

● 421 *Property.*—Contrary to Apinayé custom,⁼⁼ among the Eastern Timbira, the land
423 belongs to the tribe, not to the village community. This difference probably results
619 from the far lesser stability of the Eastern Timbira communities. A few years before
my visit to the Pukóbye the aldeia of Morro do Chapen had split into two settlements,
São Felix and Recurso, but the land remained undivided; and similar developments
occurred among the Krahó'.

⁼⁼ Sæthlage, *Nordestbras. Ind.*, 118; Reiso, 468.

⁼⁼ Nimmendaçu, *The Apinayé*, 21.

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421 A particular tribe, then, owns certain rivulets and creeks with their affluents and
 423 the important correlated *galeria* forests; the next creek and its adjacent area, be-
 49 yond the watershed, belongs to the neighboring tribe. Thus the ancient boundary
 101 between the Ramkô'kamekra and the Apá'nyekra was formed by the watershed be-
 tween the large Papagaio and Porcos creeks, two affluents of the Rio Corda. The
 entire district drained by the Flores, a rivulet tributary to the Mearim, belonged to
 the Çá'kamekra. Beyond the eastern watershed of the Flores lay the land of the
 Hakapó (=Gamella of Codó). Reduced by wars and epidemics, the Çá'kamekra
 retreated before the Neobrazilians into the extreme southern corner of their habitat;
 and when that, too, proved an untenable refuge, they united with the Ramkô'ka-
 mekra, sharing their territory on wholly equal terms.

The northern boundary of the Apá'nyekra and Ramkô'kamekra consisted of the
 wooded area of the Mearim, to which these steppe dwellers attached no importance,
 so that the Guajajára were able to settle there.

421 The Mearim divided the Çá'kamekra and Ramkô'kamekra on its right bank from
 423 the Kréyê of Bacabal on the left. Originally no Timbira tribe simultaneously occu-
 pied both banks of the Tocantins; this was subsequently done by the Krahô', but
 only because of Neobrazilian pressure. Anyone may hunt, fish, gather, and make
 a clearing at will within the tribal territory. A plot, so long as it is under cultivation,
 belongs to the family of the woman for whom the clearing was made. Wild fruit-
 trees are never privately owned unless they have been deliberately spared in clear-
 ing a plot. Fellow tribesmen never quarrel over the exploitation of the tribal area.
 The endless land disputes among Neobrazilians, often leading to murder or man-
 slaughter, figure as a proof of their malevolence. Snethlage reports that two promi-
 nent Ramkô'kamekra of mature age belonging to complementary moieties had the
 Indian agent in Barra do Corda smooth out difficulties over a boundary trans-
 gression.¹⁰⁰ I cannot conceive either how such a dispute could have arisen or how
 the moieties could have been involved, hence I must assume some misunderstanding
 on this investigator's part.

422 An object belongs to its maker or winner or to the person for whom it was pro-
 425 duced or won. For example, a wife not merely owns the utensils manufactured by
 431 herself, but also the objects—say, sleeping mats—made for her by her husband;
 437 further, the plot and house cleared and erected by the husband or his assistants.
 Children become owners of the toys made for them by parents and relatives as soon
 as the objects are handed to them. Proprietary claims of this sort are generally
 acknowledged to the fullest extent, the solitary exception being the encroachments
 of a wife's brothers on her husband's private possessions (see p. 125).

422 Except for houses and cultivated plots, private property is markedly unstable.
 425 Chattels, even the most valuable of them, such as rifles, bush-knives, axes, iron
 431 pots, and arara feathers frequently pass to new owners because of the fees often
 437 obligatory on individuals as well as organizations. As shown elsewhere (p. 75),
 an exaggerated value is attached to tame wild pigs, hence the killing of these
 animals that regularly recurs during certain festivals involves indemnification of
 the families which reared them, thus accounting for circulation of considerable
 property. Another, though rare, occasion for the transfer of many goods is the
 ceremonial exchange of precentresses when peace is concluded. At the close of
 the pepyé the families of the new initiates give presents to the two girl associates;
 in 1933 the elders expressed displeasure with the meagerness of the offerings, where-
 upon the first commandant of the pepyé stepped up, unbuckled his unused bush-

¹⁰⁰ Snethlage, *Nordostbrasil. Ind.*, 165.